



## **Investigation into Medomsley Detention Centre progresses as PPO issues Call for Evidence**

**15 July 2024** - The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) reach the next phase of their investigation as they launch an official Call for Evidence.

The PPO's special investigation into the abuse that occurred at Medomsley Detention Centre (Medomsley) has progressed as the Ombudsman's office are now in the fundamental position to call upon authorities and organisations to share information required through the Call for Evidence.

Prisons and Probation Ombudsman Adrian Usher makes an important plea, asking the specific list to share any information they hold in order to ensure their final report thoroughly and accurately presents the facts.

In October 2023 the previous government commissioned the PPO to investigate the abuse that occurred at Medomsley between 1961 and 1987. The investigation, named Operation Deerness, is investigating what authorities knew about the abuse, whether there were opportunities for authorities to have acted or intervened at that time, and what actions (if any) were taken in such instances.

Adrian Usher said: "I expect all authorities and organisations contacted to fully cooperate.

Any information obtained will inform new strands within the investigation, so it is vital that anything held is shared with my team so that we can give the victims and survivors the justice they deserve".

The PPO asks that any member of the organisations or authorities contacted provide them with a full and prompt response.

Since launching Operation Deerness, the PPO can now reveal they have undertaken a review of almost 2500 documents, statements, reports and interviews which form part of the investigative material held by Durham Police. Their cooperation has enabled the Ombudsman's office to obtain and review key information which has helped the investigation understand the horrific scale of the abuse that occurred as well as the way Medomsley operated during the relevant period. To date, almost 60 people have contacted the PPO with information and their team has conducted over 30 interviews with victims, staff and witnesses of the abuse.

Richard Tucker, Senior Investigator leading the investigation said: "I want to thank everyone who has come forward and engaged with our investigation so far. The team has been massively impacted by the courage of those who have contacted us, and we appreciate how difficult it must be to revisit those memories, especially for those of you who have openly talked about your experiences for the first time".

The information gathered from the Call for Evidence will be key in shaping the findings of the PPO's final report.

Ombudsman Adrian Usher said: "The Call for Evidence will help us identify further areas of interest. Please provide us with any information that you hold so we can ensure this will not happen again.

I commit to ensuring that any documentation or information shared with us will be reviewed and pursued during the next phase of our investigation. Information shared will not go unread”.

The Call for Evidence will run until 9 September.

Anyone with information is encouraged to contact the PPO by phoning or texting 07511 165 266 or by emailing [ppomedomsleyinvestigation@ppo.gov.uk](mailto:ppomedomsleyinvestigation@ppo.gov.uk). More information on the investigation and the Call for Evidence can be found on the PPO’s website.

**-ENDS-**

Notes to editors:

1. Adrian Usher was appointed as Prisons and Probation Ombudsman in April 2023.
2. The PPO is appointed by and reports directly to the Secretary of State for Justice. The Ombudsman's office is wholly independent of the services in remit, which include those provided by HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), Prisoner Escort and Custody Service, the Home Office (Immigration Enforcement), the Youth Custody Service, and those local authorities with secure children's homes. It is also operationally independent of, but sponsored by, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).
3. The roles and responsibilities of the PPO are set out in the Terms of Reference (ToR), the latest version of which can be found at Terms of reference – Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (ppo.gov.uk)
4. The PPO has three main investigative duties:
  - complaints made by prisoners, young people in detention, offenders under probation supervision and individuals detained under immigration powers (detained individuals)
  - deaths of prisoners, young people in detention, approved premises' residents and detained individuals due to any cause
  - deaths of recently released prisoners that occur within 14 days of release from prison (except homicide)
5. To view the Terms of Reference for this special investigation, visit our website:  
<https://ppo.gov.uk/document/terms-of-reference-medomsley-special-investigation/>
6. Operation Deerness is the name given for this investigation.
7. For media queries relating to this special investigation, please contact  
[ppomedomsleyinvestigation@ppo.gov.uk](mailto:ppomedomsleyinvestigation@ppo.gov.uk)